

I STAND IN RUINS BEHIND YOU: QUEER TACTICS OF NOISE

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TALK ABOUT THE PASSION JUST LIKE MINE

You see, what, what sounds to you like a big load of trashy old noise ... is in fact ... the brilliant music of a genius ... myself. And that music is so powerful, that it's quite beyond my control. And, ah ... when I'm in the grips of it, I don't feel pleasure and I don't feel pain, either physically or emotionally. Do you understand what I'm talking about? Have you ever, have you ever felt like that? When you just, when you just, you couldn't feel anything, and you didn't want to either. You know, like that? Do you understand what I'm saying, sir?

— *Iggy Pop*

After all, you know that noise murders thought.

— *Friedrich Nietzsche*

I am interested in what Pop describes here as "trashy old noise." More, in how it sounds to "you" like that, implying that it does not sound like that to others, others who presumably recognize it for "the brilliant music of a genius." Further, I am interested in the self-annihilating feeling of "when you just, you couldn't feel anything, and you didn't want to either." Something about this noise and something about this feeling is not only murderous of feeling and thought, but also queer. It is to an exploration of this something that I turn. What is this feeling of not feeling? Perhaps it is one of difference, not in terms of a difference of representation, but in terms of a difference of reverberation, of echo and decay — a dynamic, machinic, neutral, inorganic feeling. How does this feeling sound, or resound; that is, how do we listen to it?

My exploration takes the form of the following interrogative chiasmus: What is queer about noise and what is noisy about queerness? I ask these questions to put pressure on the assignation of sensory and affective effects to discrete forms of aesthetic media. This pressure extends noise beyond music and toward a queer practice that, like Pop's 'brilliant music of a genius,' is, in the words of the Damned, "for heroes" and "drowns out ... godly words."

I begin by suggesting the contours of what I mean to index in the concepts of queerness and noise. I then situate my discussion within an aesthetic history of music. Doing so allows me to account for the emergence of a few different musical approaches to noise. Finally, I listen to Foreigner's 1984 power ballad "I Want to Know What Love Is (IW2KWL1)" as it is mutilated beyond the bounds of its origin — specifically, as it appears in the 1998 movie *Fucking Åmål (Show Me Love)* and, subsequently, as it is re-vocalized in songs by the bands Julie Ruin and Mi Ami. Less than ascribing a fixed queer identity (neither an auditory reflection nor an ideological hailing) to any of its subsequent articulations (conceptualized as neither cover songs nor samples), I am more interested in the movement and accumulation of a feeling of queer-becoming in, out, and through the terrain of the song as it circulates; a movement of dissolution, distortion, and intensification; a repetition differentiated through queer resonances; less a homosexuality and more what Drew Daniels has described as a sonosexuality (333). The song becomes a sticky site for an affective economy of queerness, which builds and differentiates itself noisily from its basis in love. Likewise, rather than ascribing to noise a certain set of sounds, or even a genre of music, I instead listen to the promiscuity and perversion of a song-text as it becomes noisy. This course of action is taken and followed not necessarily in order to arrive at any tidy conclusions, but rather to sketch some of the interventionist tactics and potentialities into/of music that I listen to being performed in the noise of the sites that I visit.

Echoing Susan Sontag's suggestion that "in place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art," I argue that noise can provide us with one such erotics, and it can do so queerly ("Against Interpretation" 14). I do so by first describing the musical field in which noise emerges. It is one of transcendent (but not transcendental) aesthetic experience. For Arthur Schopenhauer, music is the ideal vehicle for aesthetic transcendence because it operates on the same mathematical principles as nature while at the same time avoiding being representative of anything in nature. The composer, like the philosopher, conveys her superior knowledge of the world by obeying the rules of music and thereby offers us heightened and intuitive aural perceptions in which we are temporarily sonically freed from the particularity of our own individual willing.

Just as Schopenhauer hierarchizes the fine arts in toto, so too does he hierarchize different elements within music, aligning bass notes with inorganic materiality and rhythm with lay happiness. The idea that as human subjects we should ascend with music away from the

bass/base and toward the soprano participates in a restricted economy of the number that neglects the excess of the sensible and thereby sensual world. I pose noise as the sonic component of this excess. Locating noise here places it within the cosmic energetics of what Georges Bataille calls general economy. The general economy of eroticism spatializes noise outside the confines of the perceiving subject and specifically in sub-urban spaces. Karen Tongson, for example, has identified the racialized queer aesthetics and sociabilities afforded by the sprawl of Los Angeles' suburbia. Noise in the sub-urbs resonates beyond signification (Nancy, *Listening* 31). The queer performance of noise in such spaces does not attempt to overcome ineptitude or recuperate noise toward any specific useful ends, but sacrifices itself to the waste of codified music, both generating and enduring interminable obscurity in the process.

Queerness works for me throughout as socio-symbolic stigma. Anatomically and botanically, as a small spot, mark, scar, minute hole, or apex, queer stigma is a social register of aberrant sexual identities and, more often than not, those between and among same-sexed bodies. Stigma, in this sense, echoes Erving Goffman's deployment of the term to describe "individuals dealing with social disqualification" (Love 187). I retain this echo in order to acknowledge the persistent problematics posed by positionality and identity. While I lean on work in which queerness is figured as resistance within an identitarian framework, like that of Tongson, I do not reduce the work of queerness to queer identities -- gendered, sexualized, racialized, classed, and/or otherwise. Instead, while seemingly oppositional, I layer identitarian queer studies and nonrepresentational affect theory as a heuristic in the present analysis, granting ontological priority to the affect of the latter. The irreducibility of queerness to identity comes from the ability that its social register has to radically negate the status quo in which it is encountered. Queerness figured as such is more of a *doing* than a *being*. In the context of the work of Bataille and his development of a base materialism, which I read below alongside the work of Schopenhauer, the indissociability of queerness and stigma can be thought of in terms of sacrificial mutilation, pertinently evidenced in Vincent Van Gogh's severed ear, wherein queerness performs "the rupture of personal homogeneity and the projection *outside the self* of a part of oneself" (68). This is, I think, what Pop experiences as beyond his control whence in the grips of "trashy old noise": the noise cuts him queerly in such a way that he is projected beyond interior and privatized feeling. Further, and more generally, the stigmatizing cut of queerness — the cut of possibility that allows one "to feel the growth of new margins" (Hayward 72), the cut evidenced in such feminist performance as Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*, Valerie Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto*, and The Slits' *Cut* — is one that is encountered throughout the course of the present paper, from the jump cut to cut music to cut men.

Within this context of queerness, and to transition to noise, the cut can also be construed as an ethic of listening (as different from hearing/understanding). This is how Jean-Luc Nancy describes listening: "To be listening is to be inclined toward the opening of meaning,

hence to a slash, a cut in un-sensed [*in-sensée*] indifference at the same time as toward a reserve that is anterior and posterior to any signifying punctuation" (*Listening* 27). For music, too, like queerness, can be accessed through such a doubling as produced by a cut. On the one hand, it can be read, from the local level of a textual analysis of a particular piece of music's lyrics (if it has them) to a more global one, wherein the music is read to be indicative of the time and place in which it was produced and of the social changes that it forecasts. On the other hand, music, as an aesthetic form particular to the sense of listening, resounds with irreducible aspects that, while being in the midst and constitutive of those that allow for its reading, at the same time, resists and exceeds them. These aspects of music are those that I label noise. This is noise in the general sense of something, that thing, that interferes both in the midst of signifying communication and as it is produced by signifying communication as surplus. Noise, then, describes both a sonic sense and a social one; the two of which, while they can be parsed for the purposes of discussion, are never really extricable.

Noise, as such, recalls Jacques Attali's political economy of music — one where noise is an agent of violence, a weapon, and the emergence of music marks the move to socially contain that weapon — globally, through numerical codification and standardization and locally, through the historical orders of ritual sacrifice, representation, and repetition. Similar moves can be traced across the arts more broadly, moves in which objects are trafficked in different social contexts, from religious to monarchical to capitalist. While Attali's project is committed to studying the various historical ways in which noise is reigned in by music and subsequently becomes subservient to these economies, my orientation is more toward the gaps that emerge between Attali's historical socioeconomic orders of music, wherein noise always already threatens to undo them and indeed does undo them at times of social upheaval. In this way, the economy of noise I consider is general in Bataille's sense: the energy of noise always necessarily exceeds musical order. Attali identifies what I am invoking as noise as "a subversive strain of music [...], subterranean and pursued, [...] an instrument of the ecstatic cult, an outburst of uncensored violence", and, significantly for this consideration, in a reference to Montesquieu, explicitly links it to homosexuality (13). Both noise and homosexuality elicit control for they evoke "a passion that ought to be proscribed by all nations" (Montesquieu qtd. in Attali 13). I propose that we think this linkage more expansively as not to homosexuality, but to queerness. Such a passion can be thought beyond specific same-sex material intimacies if considered aesthetically. Aesthetic passion, as opposed to the desire commonly evoked under the banner of homosexuality, points to the excessiveness of noise. Passion possesses, and it does so gratuitously.

My procession from the above intersecting lines necessarily belies noise and queerness, and if there are aspects to both that celebrate failure, then my exploration, too, partakes of this. By this, I mean the following two things: 1. Noise and queerness articulated and encountered within academic discourse do not perform in the same way as they do incarnate,

i.e. from a live(d) and/or recorded broadcast wherein subject and object confront each other, if not more directly, then at least less reflexively. That is, generating and listening to noise is one thing, while understanding and conveying noise is another: "Noise is fundamentally betrayed by trying to understand it[...] To think about [noise] is about missing the mark, speculating, imposing, and distorting — all of which are in tune with [noise itself]" (Hegarty 157). As such, my case is made more strongly by the perverse permutations of "IW2KWLI" themselves, which brings me to the second reason why writing about queerness and noise is bound to failure: 2. Distortion results not only in the act of thinking itself, but also in my myopia as a fanatic of these sites, "for no one who wholeheartedly shares in a given sensibility can analyze it; he can only, whatever his intention, exhibit it" (Sontag, "Notes on Camp" 276). The failure of this paper to engage a coherent analysis of noise and queerness, then, is evidence of the exhibition of the sensibilities of noise and queerness.

Distortion, then, is one component of noise and queerness that points to the impenetrability of my sites of analysis; another is transience. If, after Attali, noise is something that is "subterranean and pursued", then my engagement with noise and queerness is a fugitive one. If I am at all able to touch on these concepts, then it is a pressing that just as soon sends them off running again. I persist in this pursuit as an act that both undoes (reigns in and tames) and redoes (confuses and libidinizes) the work that these concepts do.

A final preliminarily point at which noise and queerness intersect for me is in the literature on noise music itself. As is the case with many other histories, queerness is the ghost that haunts the history of noise music. For, while many of noise's practitioners were/are queer, the criticism and analysis tends not to address this and instead concentrates more on the abstractions to which noise lends itself, threatening to erase noise as a practice by displacing its subjects. I do not mean to suggest that a greater emphasis on artists' biographies is needed or that all instantiations of noise are queer (far from it), but that the way in which noise has been written about reflects the heteronormativity of the discourses in which it circulates. The logic that typically underlies this heteronormativity in terms of aesthetic practices is that to locate and address, through discussion, the persistent presence of queerness is to limit both the art itself and its attendant audience. I contend, however, that the erotic of queerness is an expansive and ever-mutating one.

THE AIMLESS NOISE OF BAD MUSIC

Having proffered some preliminary and introductory thoughts on what queerness and noise do and how they work and (mis)behave in this paper, I now think about noise as something anathema to music insofar as music has been written in a western philosophical discourse that historically hierarchizes aesthetic forms. My point of reference here is Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory as presented in his work *The World as Will and Representation* and Nancy's subsequent interpretation of Schopenhauer in his work on listening. Schopenhauer's thought

emerges shortly after the early modern period in which the autonomy of music is established (Hegarty 7),^[1] and both distills and criticizes much of the thought that precedes it (e.g. the *Critiques* of Immanuel Kant) as it foreshadows revolutions in thinking to come (e.g. those propagated by Friedrich Nietzsche). Nancy locates in Schopenhauer's will "the passage from a plastic and poetic paradigm to a musical paradigm[...] that is to say, being as desire rather than being as reason" (*Listening* 53). Schopenhauer's attention to music, then, marks not only a project of philosophical inquiry, but also a historical paradigm shift from regimes of cosmological and representational fixity in which music reveals something of a fundamental truth to a time in which music's power is not one of revelation but of the generation and control of affect itself.

For Schopenhauer, "aesthetic pleasure in the beautiful consists, to a large extent, in the fact that, when we enter the state of pure contemplation, we are raised for the moment above all willing, above all desires and cares; we are, so to speak, rid of ourselves" (390). Though particular wills are decidedly never freed permanently, contemplation of the universal condition of willing is a temporary freedom. The work that inspires this contemplation is divisible into familiar categories, but in a hierarchical order that corresponds to categories of the will. These gradations from the lowest to the highest are as follows: inorganic matter, plants, animals, and humans, and respectively architecture, painting, sculpture, and verbal arts (most saliently, theatre). Music exists both at the top of and at a remove from this hierarchy. Its peculiarity lies in that, of the arts, it is perceived most directly, i.e. because it does not index the world as/of representation, but presents the world as willing per se, it is perceived without the intermediaries of the Platonic Ideas. Music unsettles a sensory hierarchy based on representation, for which visuality would be supreme. This hearkens to Nancy's location of a musical paradigm emergent in Schopenhauer where music disrupts (and in so doing gains aesthetic supremacy) any verifiable correlation between an object and its representation. While noise shares in the unreasonability and nonrepresentationality Nancy identifies in Schopenhauer's musical paradigm, it does not do so in the same way that music does for Schopenhauer.

This is because Schopenhauer's explanation of music as the universal language and as the only art form to be found in heaven is one that upholds the music and conventions of the common practice period. As such, the way in which music as the supreme art form enacts aesthetic perception is through four-part harmony's derivation from the natural world, as was first illustrated by Pythagoras' demonstration of the arithmetic of musical intervals. Music, then, expresses not only the world, but also the rules that govern it: "Its form can be reduced to quite definite rules expressible in numbers, from which it cannot possibly depart without entirely ceasing to be music" (Schopenhauer 256). The aurality of music combined with its generation based on rules allegedly observable in the sensual world contribute to the notion that it exists in a parallel universe accessible through aesthetic contemplation.

Within these rules, Schopenhauer goes on to make a correspondence between the categorizations of the will and harmony, such that inorganic matter, plants, animals, and humans are to be heard in the bass, tenor, alto, and soprano respectively. The interplay and resolution of dissonance into consonance of these sounds through harmony and rhythm is what compromises the aesthetic form of music. It is still not noise, though, for the following two reasons of interest to me: 1. Noise and its practitioners know not of the appropriate end, utility, or purpose of music. This end is the temporary transcendence of a subject's individual willing. Noise does not achieve the status of music, or retains the status of bad music, because it remains arbitrary: "An arbitrary playing with the means of art without proper knowledge of the end is in every art the fundamental characteristic of bungling. Such bungling shows itself in the supports that carry nothing, in the purposeless volutes, prominences, and projections of bad architecture, in the meaningless runs and figures together with *the aimless noise of bad music*" (Schopenhauer 2, 408, emphasis mine). 2. In the above quotation and elsewhere, Schopenhauer, who acknowledges receipt of it from Goethe, makes an analogy between music at the top of his hierarchy and architecture at its base — as architecture is the symmetrical division of space, music is the rhythmic division of time. The less controlled by rhythm a piece of music is, the more "analogous to the ruin divested of symmetry" (454).

While Schopenhauer is quick to emphasize that this relationship between music and space is solely analogous and only applies to divisions of time and space, that music should assert its special place at this time is important, for this establishment is concomitant with the differentiation and privatization of space: "With indoor living, two things developed antonymously: the high art of music and noise pollution — for noises were the sounds that were kept outside" (Schafer 35 qtd. in Hegarty 7). Noise, then, comes to be seen as not only aligned with the ruin, but also, for reasons that I address below, other excised negative spaces, such as, in Bataille's terms, the cemetery and slaughterhouse and, in my terms, suburban spaces — spaces on the sides of roads, in closets, and on dance floors. Noise, moreover, as sound does have a spatial quality that extends beyond analogy in that it names the space of reverberation between a surface from which sounds issue and a surface on which they are recorded. Figured this way, the space of noise is not only like a ruin, but also capable of being physically ruinous when an intensity of sound deteriorates the hearing sensitivity of a particular species' aural receptors. Combining a few of the threads I have just set loose above, noise, as it is approached through Schopenhauer, does not transcend individual willing and, as such, employs the rules of music ineptly. The arbitrariness and incompetence of noise is spatialized not only because sound in general exists as a wave in space, but also because the categories of music and noise are differentiated and consolidated spatially, such that sound that is produced and appreciated indoors is qualified as music and thereby designates what remains outside and threatens coming in as noise.

At this point, I consider Foreigner's original performance of "IW2KWLI" in conjunction with the video that accompanied the song in 1984 and then juxtapose this with another video, a scene from director Lukas Moodysson's 1998 movie *Show Me Love*. This juxtaposition highlights the way in which noise is kept or, in the latter case, kicked outside.

Unlike the aimlessness of noise, Foreigner's version of the song relies on a traditional dramatic structure that builds toward a destination, expending energy in order to reach a point, and successfully aspires for normative success, as in the first vocal line of the second verse, "This mountain I must climb." While the lyrics themselves remain gender and sex neutral, the video that accompanies the song predictably climaxes with a woman leaping into the lead singer's arms. The narrative of the song is mirrored in both its commercial success, the way it too climbs the charts, and in the video for the song. In the video, the band enters the studio alone; dominates its interior, private, and privileged space; and invites the incidental and racially Othered New Jersey Mass Choir in to sing on the track. The choir encircles and encloses, yet stands outside, the band, and most prominently the lead singer, performing a kind of double interiorization. All this before the aforementioned leap signifies the close of the song as the lead singer's arms enclose the woman. Musically, the song follows a similar arc, building slowly from the rhythm line of a smooth bass synth and drums and crescendoing with the addition of voices whose place at the forefront of the song is never without certainty.

The first perversion of "IW2KWLI" I visit occurs in director Lukas Moodysson's 1998 movie, *Show Me Love*, in which two adolescent girls fall for each other in the small Swedish town of Åmål. The movie initially performs its noisiness through its original title, *Fucking Åmål*, which consternated public officials of the town who feared a threat to their economy (Griffiths 29). The scene in which "IW2KWLI" is heard, though, is one that finds the girls, Agnus and Elin, attempting to escape Åmål's confines as they hitchhike en route to Stockholm. This already departs from Foreigner's video, which traces not a movement from the country to the city, but from the city to the studio. Diagetic sound muffles the opening verses of the song as the pair makes arrangements with the driver, but when he leaves temporarily to attend to his car that will not start, the girls engage in a consummating kiss that is concomitant with the explosion of the song's chorus. This scene not only changes the sexual orientations and ages of the lovers who enact the song, but also makes their necking neither the resolution of their story, nor of the song. Rather, the very high point of the song's chorus is interrupted as the driver catches glimpse of what transpires inside and evacuates Agnus and Elin who, in an extra layer of queerness, he has been led to believe are sisters. After screaming, "What on earth are you up to?" the man abandons the girls on the side of the road that they took to in pursuit of a better future. Instead, they are squandered in erotic coupling.

Show Me Love re-orientes "IW2KWL1" away from the fulfillment of adult contemporary heterosexuality and toward an unfulfilled adolescent queerness. Rather than being incorporated into a private and privileged interior space, Agnus and Elin are ejected, rejected, dejected, and abjected^[2] to the drizzly roadside on which we initially encounter them, no longer hopeful of an escape route to Stockholm as the big city location of a better future. The tradeoff, or consolation prize, is that what in Foreigner's video comes off as an almost platonic embrace, here, becomes an embarrassingly passionate kiss.

THE MELANCHOLIC NOISE OF THE LIVING TOMB AND THE RUIN OF JULIE RUIN

If we glean from these videos how music has come to function in relation to noise as a space of bungling, then how does this space function? As mentioned above (and in a temporal register that differs in emphasis from my current spatial one), Attali hears noise as a threatening sound anterior to its social sanctioning. However, as noise persists throughout the orders he locates in history, then it is also sometimes posterior to them. This is what lends noise its quality of prophecy, for it foreshadows the socio-historical order that will arise to contain it (19).^[3]

Noise is present and persistent in society as a musical form for which society is yet to have a register. As such, the temporality of noise is a melancholic one and suggests a certain spatialization. As Judith Butler has described, "Walter Benjamin remarks that melancholy spatializes, and that its effort to reverse or suspend time produces 'landscapes' as its signature effect. One might profitably read the Freudian topography that melancholy occasions as precisely such a spatialized landscape of the mind" (*The Psychic Life of Power* 174). Noise read as a melancholic space that both saturates and exceeds the time in which it is occasioned can too be read as queer with recourse to a specific psychic topography analyzed by Butler, namely that of Antigone. Antigone is queered by the tangled lines of kinship from which she emerges and which she continues to produce. Here I posit noise as structurally homologous to the social death that Butler describes in her reading of Antigone: "In confronting the unspeakable in Antigone, are we confronting a socially instituted foreclosure of the intelligible, a socially instituted melancholia in which the unintelligible life emerges in language as a living body might be interred into a tomb" (*Antigone's Claim* 80-1). Like the spatial trope of the ruin that is the living tomb of Antigone, noise is the living tomb that emerges through the sonorous envelope of musical language at the point of its failure to represent noise as intelligible music.

These points of emergence that are marked as both queer for their unintelligible emission — "what sounds to you like a big load of trashy old noise" — and prophetic for their forecast of social control can be encountered since the common practice period around which Schopenhauer situates his ideas on music. Now canonized within the western avant-garde, they

run from Arnold Schoenberg's dodecaphonic method, which expanded the rules for harmony, to the Futurist celebration of the noise of industry, most notable in Luigi Russolo's manifesto *The Art of Noises*, to John Cage's realization of the impossibility of silence, after which any sound can be framed as music.

I mention this archive to indicate that the noise I describe is not without precedence. I also do so, however, to indicate that one way in which the aesthetic production of the above can be thought in concert is through its instrumentalization of noise. In this sense, novel harmonic systems, novel instrumentation, and/or novel compositional strategies respectively, locate in noise a use value that can be captured, controlled, and applied toward the end of a continuous dilation of music, as "composers using [dissonance] tended to think of their work as reinvigorating the western tradition of music" (Hegarty 12). So while sonically these noises are distinct from the music philosophized by Schopenhauer, they still, I think, play by his rules, if, albeit, by making new rules — by not playing arbitrarily with the means of art. In light of the more contemporary development of a genre of noise music, or more specifically Japanoise, which is influenced in some cases by the above avant-garde, the two sonic transplantations of "IW2KWL1" I visit below by Julie Ruin and Mi Ami actually probably sound quite musical. My description of them here, however, is not concerned with tracing any particular musical lineages or characteristics that would qualify a particular piece of music for inclusion as part of the genre of noise. Rather, noise works for me as a queer tactic of sound making that spatializes bungling.

On that note, the second perversion of the song I visit occurs in the 1998 Julie Ruin song "I Wanna Know What Love Is." Julie Ruin started as the solo project of Kathleen Hanna and has now been revised and revitalized as a fully fledged band. Hanna developed Julie Ruin initially between two other projects, the riot grrrl band Bikini Kill and the electroclash band Le Tigre. Hanna ironizes "IW2KWL1" by casualizing the infinitive of the title and "sampling" it as chorus of her song, which occurs between verses concerning police brutality, incompetence, and violence against women. I say "sample" because Hanna does not actually reproduce Foreigner's recording, but revoices it. These revoicings are sandwiched between two more conventional samples. The first asks, "Do you remember when we were young and impressionable and taught to believe everything the Great White Father told us?" This sampled question from feminist comedian and musician Rusty Warren echoes the press release for the record, which asks, "What would l'Écriture féminine sound like as music?" (Joy Press and Walters) The second sample is the first half of a question, "When they kick at your front door" (the second half of which follows: "How you going to come?") and comes from the 1979 Clash song "The Guns of Brixton," a song also concerning police brutality. Le Tigre member Johanna Fateman has described the band as "fuck[ing] with pop structure and pop pleasure by contaminating it with political content and simplistic uses of Techno apparatus", which I think also applies to the Julie Ruin project (Joy Press and Walters). While the sources of these other samples in this song accomplish contamination in terms of political content, the

Julie Ruin project also contaminates through its implementation of technology. The Julie Ruin record was recorded by Hanna alone in her closet and employs a junkshop sampler and drum machine (ibid.). While the closet is still an indoor space, it marks a de- and then re-territorialization of music production (Hegarty 185), and in this case, one that lends itself to "messing around," such that Hanna's lo-fi production strips away the polish of "IW2KWLI" and with it, its assumed significance (Joy Press and Walters). Rather "than be some dick's maid, babe, or wife", as the original seems to imply, Hanna's "I Wanna Know What Love Is" is a performance of noise that interferes in patriarchal authority and musical overproduction.

While I have already stated that I do not attempt to trace a historic lineage of noise as my main line of argumentation here, situating Julie Ruin as a project that emerges from riot grrrl is significant for the way in which that movement deploys the figure of the girl. The girl is not only another uniting factor across *Show Me Love*, Julie Ruin, and Mi Ami, but is also a figure that relates to the ruin of Julie Ruin, or the melancholic noise of the living tomb, with which I began this section. Like Antigone, who stubbornly clings to the need for ritual acknowledgement of her brother's death even at the expense of her well being in the status quo, Julie Ruin's deployment of the girl foregrounds a politics that are potentially lost in developmental and progressive narratives of sex and gender. This is evident from the opening lyrics of the song, in which Hanna poses a question of her own: "How many girls stay awake all night too scared to sleep and too scared to fight back?" Elizabeth Freeman, in her work around queer temporalities, has described the girl in terms very similar to those I attribute to the tactics of queer noise: "[The girl] represents what Elspeth Probyn calls 'a political tactic ... used to turn identity inside out.' The girl-sign acknowledges an uncontrollable past, the uncontrollability of the past, its inability to explain the present — and the promising *distortions* effected when the past suddenly, unpredictably erupts into the present forms of sexual and gendered personhood" ("Packing History" 741, emphasis mine). If, following Butler, the living tomb of Antigone offers a literal spatialization of melancholy, then what does that tomb sound like? One answer that the girl offers in her temporal distortions is "noisy." Freeman's work also points to the ways in which the girl conceptually contains bungling and perversion: "Perverts — melancholically attached to obsolete erotic objects or fetishes they ought to have outgrown, or repeating unproductive bodily behaviors over and over — refuse the commodity-time of speedy manufacture and planned obsolescence" ("Turn the Beat Around" 34). In moving from Julie Ruin to Mi Ami, I move, then, from the girlish and melancholic qualities of noise, to those related qualities of perversion, obsolescence, and unproductivity.

GIVE ME YR EARS, SPLIT OPEN YR HEAD

Above, I discussed the spatialization of noise as melancholic, not because of its lugubriousness, but because of its unintelligibility. Queer relationalities can be discussed similarly as unintelligible. Most immediately, one reason for which they are foreclosed from

the intelligible is that they perform a different form of foreclosure: "The problem with queer lives, then, is that they categorically foreclose the biological expression of utility — reproduction" (Winnubst 84). Noise is queer in a similar sense of being nonreproductive, both in that noise is often times generated through improper use of, and bungling with, instrumentation and in that, subsequently, noise does not reproduce the rules and the numbers of music, but instead moves toward a space outside of rules, or a space where rules are yet to be determined and implemented. Thus while noise is prophetic, it is not deterministic; it does not bring about a futurity that is presumed will come to fruition, a probability, but actively creates the conditions on which the future will act, a potentiality. In the words of Sonic Youth, "chaos is the future" ("Confusion is Next").

But to think about queerness (and noise for that matter) in terms exclusively of biological nonreproduction places it in a restricted economy.^[4] Within such an economy, queerness is flattened, reduced, and distilled to genitalia. The result of which is not only moral panic around and policing of queer sex acts — what queers are or are not doing with their bodies — but also the privilege, mobility, and ascendance of the white gay male who, "through the metonymic exchange of capital reproduction for the foreclosed biological reproduction," is allotted a certain transient acceptance and power within the fixed economy of utility (Winnubst 84). Just as the codification of sound delimits, naturalizes, and legitimizes what counts as music at the expense and control of the potentiality of sound, the codification of identity (sexual and otherwise) requires a similar maintenance of exclusion. As sexuality is limitedly defined genitally, identity is limitedly defined biologically. Identity works by assigning a code, presumed to be stable, based on biometric and biographic information, which can then be managed. I now return to the Batailleian thought to which I have already gestured. Outside and underneath such restricted economies of biology and capital, Bataille suggests thinking in terms of general economy, in which production, distribution, and consumption are not activities that regulate and safeguard against a scarcity — of bodies, of capital — but are activities that must confront that which they will inevitably be unable to recuperate. This excess Bataille terms the *accursed share*, as that which precipitates from "the unoblatable wave of senseless wastage welling up beneath human endeavour" (Land 46).

A general economy of queerness, then, can be thought of less in terms of sexuality and more in terms of eroticism. Eroticism, for Bataille, names that pull toward animality from which we must have been separated in order to constitute ourselves as human: "To abhor squandering uselessness or, at the other end of production, to abhor excessive waste, is to distance oneself from animality" (Winnubst 85). Eroticism, as such, already resounds with noise in Schopenhauer: "The impure discords, giving no definite interval, can be compared to the monstrous abortions between two species of animals, or between man and animal" (*World Will Representation* 259). This is to suggest, then, that part of what queerness does is debase and desubliminate the human subject insofar as it has come to be constituted by restricted economies based on a telos of utility. Music has been configured within such an economy as it

has been aligned with numerical codification and with the ascent of man away from inorganic matter and animality and toward himself, away from the bass and toward the soprano, or, more generally, away from rhythm and toward melody. A queer sensitivity and attention to noise not only reveals and revels in the byproducts of procreativity and capitalism but does the necessary social work of sacrificially expelling that waste, as an earthworm does in dirt. Perhaps it seems strange to describe an earthworm as performing sacrificial work. Indeed, for Nancy, sacrifice is a religious term that necessarily labels an attempt to reach up toward the sacred, which always remains unattainable and distinct.^[5] I use sacrifice here, however, in the Bataille sense I began with, retaining an anti-religiosity, but all the while still describing the rupture of personal homogeneity that queer noise performs as a form of sovereign consumption. That is, as the kind of consumption that occurs in general economy, "consumption that does no work, produces no new workers, and uses energy without recompense" (Wendling 47). Significantly, sacrifice as such is an impossible project insofar as it never reaches completion, for there is no general economy outside a restricted one; "however, the sense of this impossibility, this living-on through failure, is exactly the only sovereignty [briefly] attainable" (Hegarty 48).

Harkening both to sovereign consumption in the form of the carnal sacrifice of circumcision as well as to a violence against authority, like that proposed by Hanna, the third and final perversion of "IW2KWLI" I visit occurs in the 2009 Mi Ami (two members of which were previously involved with the post-hardcore project Black Eyes) song "Cut Men" from the EP of the same name. Like Hanna, "Cut Men" makes "IW2KWLI" noisy by revoicing its chorus, though not in the same way. Unlike the Julie Ruin song, in "Cut Men", "I want to know what love is" are some of the only words I can understand. Two factors make this so. They are the noise-making tactics I highlight in this song. The first has to do with lead singer Daniel Martin-McCormick's shrieking vocals, which have been described as "sounding frighteningly like a 15-year-old girl having an orgasm on peyote" (Sciortino). What the loss of control that this description points to in its combination of feminization, eroticization, and intoxication is the way in which the vocals on this track expose the limits of what is perceived to be one's natural pitch. In this respect, the noisiness of "Cut Men" recalls Roland Barthes' notion of the grain of the voice, which "takes away the possibility of expression being controlled by the subject/individual and democratizes the listening judgment to be made. In addition, this grain creates the individuality of the voice in its own right. [...] This individualization further minimizes the singer/speaker's role in producing 'their' voice, because [...] this 'individuality' is not a personal one, it is not someone's property" (31-32). Martin-McCormick's vocals, though individual in their sonic quality, are not individual in the sense of being possessed solely by him; rather, their individual quality is offered to the collectivity of the audience. The second noisy factor also has something to do with a democratization of the listening judgment. Situating their sound against the calculated and compressed heaviness to be listened to in corporate rock, the band stresses the importance of

a sound that is physical and embodied, one played not by assigning a differentiated dynamic to each part of the song, but by weaving together all parts in full relief, such that the rhythm has equal footing with the melody. This is precisely the language of white noise, 'sound in which all frequencies have equal amplitude [...] it replaces conventional signification with a visceral experience, particularly if noise relates to the use of excessive volume' (Bannister 158). This viscerality is one in which Tongson brings together the idea of a noise and a queerness that cut through restricted economies such that the sound emitted exceeds the control of its performer and reaches out into the world, "a kind of collective musical experimentation that does not obsess upon the wounds of the self but turns wounded music into something that might literally move others [...] move them to dance" (Tongson, "Tickle Me Emo" 64). This is precisely the way in which people are moved at a Mi Ami show.

WAVES OF MUTILATION, OR, I WANT TO KNOW WHAT SHATTERED LOVE IS

Mi Ami have another EP called *Echononecho*. As a way of transitioning from their work in its specificity and back to a discussion of noise across the examples I have proffered, and, as a way of beginning to conclude, I devote some attention to wanting to know what love is through this idea of the echo. The echo is qualitatively both melancholic and inorganic, both persisting as an object beyond the death and decay of the voice and persisting with difference maintained through mechanical repetition. Together, these qualities destabilize conceptions of what is natural — of the identity, location, and coherence of narrative subject and symbolic meaning. Brian Massumi (who, incidentally, translated Attali's book), using the echo to discuss his understanding of intensity, remarks, "An echo, for example, cannot occur without a distance between surfaces for the sounds to bounce off of. But the resonance is not on the walls. It is in the emptiness between them. It fills the emptiness with its complex patterning. [...] The interference pattern arises where the sound wave intersects with itself. The bouncing back and forth multiplies the sound's movement [...] Resonance can be seen as converting distance, or extension, into intensity. It is a qualitative transformation of distance into an immediacy of self-relation" (14). What interests me in this quote is the way in which Massumi first spatializes sound and then quickly converts that spatialization into not a substantive but a relative self by way of interference. Massumi goes on to discuss the capacity for a self to relate in terms of affect. The affect up for discussion, here, of course, is love. While love in the lay sense is not an affect in Massumi's Deleuzian terms, Nancy's notion of shattered love does approach the pre-discursive and pre-personal. As such, I argue that the performance of noise in these performances of "IW2KWL1" are in fact affective performances of shattered love. Shattered love moves away from love defined in ways similar to those in which I have discussed music and Foreigner's performance, those that employ a terminology of "desire [...] demand,

seduction, dependence, and so on,' and an associated analytics of 'calculation, investment, completion, retribution, and the like" (*Inoperative Community* 98). Shattered love is an extraction and departure from carnal lust, Oedipalized desire, and misogynist romance. Rather than actually pursuing love or even pursuing wanting to know what love is, noise performs — noise *does* — shattered loving, a giving that is giving up. This is why I read the condemnation of passion encountered in the first section not as merely a homosexual passion, which could be discussed in terms of lack and fulfillment, but as an aesthetic passion. This moves the conversation from lack to fullness; noise is music filled up. In Massumi's terms, the distance of sounds resonating intensely fills a body with experience. In Nancy's terms, "the beating of the heart — rhythm of the partition of being, syncope of the sharing of singularity — cuts across presence, life, consciousness" (*Inoperative Community* 99). The beating of the heart is a shattering of the self, a cutting into shards, but this cutting is not a diminishment or a separation so much as an affirmation and amplification of difference. I listen to the perversions of "IW2KWL I" in the following two respects: 1. In the bass/base, rhythm, beating, which is precisely what dissonance is — two notes played simultaneously but with slightly different frequencies. 2. In the cut, which is not collected and captured, but novel, transient, and generative. In these senses — in a resonating echo, or in a beating cut — the ear and the heart are aligned, both orifices that necessarily remain open to and constituted by that which passes through them even as that which passes through them is not retained. The queer tactics of noise of my subtitle, then, are ways of acknowledging the always already openness and alignment of the ear and heart, an openness and alignment that constantly negotiate and reconfigure the boundary between interiority and exteriority, subject and world. They temporally and spatially disperse the coherent subject, or make of the subject a living tomb like Antigone's, acknowledging and exposing an intimacy with other objects in the world, a love of and between things. *Show Me Love*, Julie Ruin, and Mi Ami all echo and ironically amplify Foreigner's "I Want to Know What Love Is". In so doing, they perform like the mythological nymph Echo, a girl who repeats the voice of others until she turns to stone. The shattered love of queer noise leaves me standing in ruins behind you.

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Describing the music that Attali foreshadows to come after his book's publication, Susan McClary, in her afterward, remarks that it "bristles with genuine sonic noise [most of it maintains a decibel level physically painful to the uninitiated], and its style incorporates other features that qualify as cultural noise: the bizarre visual appearance of many of its proponents, texts with express political content, and deliberate inclusion of blacks and of women" (157). These features that McClary identifies are engaged in similar and differing ways across the noisy perversions of "IW2KWL I". The first interrupts the visual/spatial narrative of the song, the second its production, and the third its voice. Another way in which their commonality can be described is as "emotionally raw incarnations of arrested development in peripheral spaces," for the woman of Foreigner's music video is replaced by

something decidedly more girlish in the examples that I proffer (Tongson 56). Arrested development (and Tongson and I are riffing on the work of Judith [Jack] Halberstam^[6] here), relates to queer noise in the temporal sense of a prolonged childhood and subsequent delayed maturation. This is how the temporality of the girlish would be couched in normative, closed economies; at the same time, it can also be described as the dislodging of certain affective political registers [teenage feelings] from where they are normally resigned to reside and played out [physically and audibly] across a spectrum of ages. Though the quality of the girl is identifiable here on a molar level (physically sonic and significantly semiotic), she effects subtler though no less radical shifts temporally that allow for the distance necessary for echo. Indeed, for Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the girl is the figure par excellence of a becoming imperceptible, a force of desire that slips into the in between of age and sex, the end of which is a micropolitical knowing how to love. In terms of peripheral spaces, while Tongson is thinking about literal suburbs, I think the attribution of noise to a peripheral space can be brought closer to my discussion of Bataille if thought in terms of the prefix sub-, both of -urban and of -ject. This conception hearkens to the etymology of the sub- in suburban, as outside of and spatially beneath the elevated and walled Roman city and takes into account the necessary excess produced by the city that cannot be contained by its zoning, excesses I locate on the side of a road, in a closet, and on a dance floor. This emphasis on sub- also speaks to the queer sub-ject who, though experiencing music subjectively, emerges in intimate and passionate interaction with and reception of the world that is under, close to, up to, and toward her.^[7] Such a subject in such a space is one that replays the erotic act of listening itself: "To listen is to enter that spatiality by which, at the same time, I am penetrated, for it opens up in me as well as around me, and from me as well as toward me: it opens me inside me as well as outside, and it is through such a double, quadruple, or sextuple opening that a 'self' can take place" (Nancy, *Listening* 14).

The excess, if there is any, of Foreigner's "IW2KWLI" is one ultimately put to the ends of utility — economically, musically, and sexually. The practices I have described above do not revolutionize this song but intervene in it by mis-/dis- using its components by mis-/dis- placing them. In so doing, their noisy musicality encourages a passion, productive of a self, that leads nowhere — one encountered with your girlfriend in the backseat of a stranger's car, with yourself in your closet, and with others on the dance floor.

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Notes

1. "Music was not autonomous, even in the west, until the early modern period" (Hegarty 7).
2. Expelled from a place, refused acceptance, depressed, cast down. The abject has been theorized most saliently in Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* and taken up by performance studies and queer studies alike in works like Karen Shimakawa's *National Abjection: The Asian American Body Onstage* and Darieck Scott's *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination*.
3. "Noises ... are prophetic because they create new orders, unstable and changing" (Attali 19).
4. "[Music] would seem to have the strongest affinities with that most abstract of all social realities, economics, with which it shares a peculiar ultimate object which is number" (Jameson, "Foreword" vii).
5. See: Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Ground of the Image*. Trans. Jeff Fort. New York: Fordham UP, 2005.
6. See: Judith [Jack] Halberstam. *In a Queer Time and Place*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.
7. See: Shaviro, *Without Criteria*